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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

Statement submitted by Institute for Women Studies and Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of the Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.

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1- The Institute for Women's Studies and Research (IWSR) is an Iranian non-governmental organization that works to promote the status of women in Iran. As the issue of men's participation in gender equality is one of the major concerns of the Institute, since we believe that without the effective and comprehensive involvement of men, such mission can not accomplished. The following statement is the views of the Institute on this issue.

2- There are two significant approaches in realizing the gender equality. The first approach gives importance to human rights values, and discusses gender equality with an emphasis on protecting and promotion of women's human rights. The second approach stresses on gender and development, and analyses situation of women based on the role they can play in sustainable human development.

3- Gender equality based on each of these two approaches can not be realized unless all individuals of the society are involved. Men and women both have rights as well as responsibilities towards realizing gender equality.

4- Lack of due attention to the gender equality will lead into an imbalance and will destroy the basis of democracy and human development in a society. Based on paragraph 25 of the Beijing Declaration, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, governments expressed their

determination to encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality. Also the Declaration emphasized on the equal sharing of responsibilities and a harmonious partnership between women and men that were critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy. Also in different places in the Platform of Action of the Beijing Conference, there have been certain points that they refer directly to the role of men in achieving gender equality.

5- To be able to guarantee the active participation of men in realizing gender equality, changing of attitudes and behaviors is a basic measure. Any change in attitude will end into change in behaviors, a long term process that will be realized through deep cultural strategies. Also the change in social behaviors will end into the positive change in attitude towards gender equality.

6- Problems of men are mixed with those of women and problems of women are entangled with those men. Participation of both men and women has to be realized. As an example, the reproductive health of women can not be realized with men's participation. Also in social life, changing of gender clichés will happen only if men and women both change their views about gender equality.

7- We believe that one of the major concerns in this regard is the resistance of men that will bring about the women's reaction, and in one word fosters

the existing clichés and imbalance the family as a social institution. This is an issue that should be discussed in the meetings of the 48th session of the Commission on Status of Women. However, while considering this concern, we would like to emphasize on this point that there have been a growing interest on the role of men in achieving gender equality during the past decade. Even in our Institute, men are now involved in our activities and it seems that little by little men are looking at the gender equality as a societal responsibility. We believe such resistance is one of the persistent obstacles and challenges to men's and boy's full participation in efforts to achieve gender equality. Part of the reason for such resistance goes back to the existing traditional and cultural clichés. Therefore, the Institute believes that we should focus our efforts on the next generation and therefore boys should be one of the major target groups of training and education on gender equality.